

Ubuntu pedagogy – transforming educational practices in South Africa through an African philosophy: from theory to practice

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Abstract

Education in South Africa, and Africa at large, has always been construed from Eurocentric perspectives despite Africa being rich with indigenous philosophies and knowledge systems such as the Ubuntu philosophy. In this paper, we bring forth the viability of Ubuntu pedagogy, which draws from the indigenous Ubuntu philosophy, for the promotion of co-existence, social cohesion and inclusivity in education. Drawing from the Collective Fingers Theory, we examine the extent to which the principles of Ubuntu philosophy can cultivate and restore African indigenous values and cultures in diverse educational settings. We draw from literature to position Ubuntu pedagogy within educational practices. Themes emerging from the subject literature are: Collective Fingers theory, Ubuntu philosophy, principles of Ubuntu pedagogy. As a transformative approach, Ubuntu pedagogy, when embraced with the understanding and dignity it deserves, has a potential not only for reconnecting students with their indigenous values, heritage and cultures, but it also has a capacity to cultivate Ubuntu social values of solidarity, co-existence, respect and cooperation among students. We recommend Ubuntu pedagogy as a transformative and decolonial approach that promotes inclusion and social justice. The paper provides principles that guide the possible and effective implementation of Ubuntu pedagogy in diverse educational settings and implications for practice. The paper contributes to the ongoing debates on the decolonisation of education and the role of Ubuntu philosophy in the restoration of African values in the South African education system.

Keywords: Ubuntu philosophy, Ubuntu pedagogy, Collective Fingers Theory, solidarity, co-existence, social justice

Introduction

Africa is rich in indigenous philosophies and cultural practices such as Ubuntu, which, when embraced appropriately can be used as a teaching approach that is culturally responsive to indigenous students and to students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Ubuntu as a pedagogical approach has the potential to preserve indigenous knowledge systems and

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practices among students and restore their identities (Ukpokodu 2016:154). Ubuntu is an indigenous African philosophy and way of life that has been used for many centuries to shape, guide and maintain positive human interactions, relationships and well-being among African indigenous people and communities (Ramose 2002:231). Ubuntu philosophy is grounded in humanistic values and principles of solidarity, kindness, cooperation, respect and compassion. Ubuntu, when embraced correctly, can therefore promote and nurture communal living, co-existence and interdependence in educational settings (Mbigi 1997:31).

It is surprising that a culturally rich indigenous practice such as Ubuntu remains overlooked and neglected in educational spaces, especially those located in Africa and, specifically, in South Africa. Mucina (2013:19) notes that many African institutions continue to function from the Western, Eurocentric view which undermines and dismisses indigenous philosophies such as Ubuntu as false assumptions and simple illegitimate African thinking. This rejection of the Ubuntu philosophy could be the main reason why it has not filtered through to education systems and curricula in many African countries, including South Africa (Maphalala 2017:10237). Muwanga-Zake (2009:413) posits that colonial education systems and their assumption of Western philosophical world views as superior knowledge have socialised Africans, especially the youth, out of their indigenous beliefs and knowledge systems and given them a false 'global view' of who they are. Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies have almost vanished among young people, their existence confined to distant memories. African people, especially the youth, no longer remember who they were and who they are (Muwanga-Zake 2009:413).

Meanwhile, South African scholars like Hlatshwayo, Shawa & Nxumalo (2020:4) have noticed that learners in South Africa grow up with incorrect information and knowledge about their indigenous heritage and ethnic values like Ubuntu because the school curriculum and pedagogies lack African philosophy such as Ubuntu. Learners have lost their African values and identity. Another South African scholar, Letseka (2013:334), adds that the education system in South Africa cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the local indigenous knowledge systems such as Ubuntu philosophy that has guided the way of life of the African people for centuries. There is no complete transformation and decolonisation of education in South Africa without restoration and recognition of indigenous heritages of the African people (Letseka 2013:335).

In this paper we argue that Ubuntu philosophy, which is indigenous to African people, when embraced with the understanding and dignity it deserves, has the potential not only of reconnecting students in the South African education system with their indigenous values, heritage and cultures, but Ubuntu philosophy has a capacity to promote co-existence, social cohesion and inclusivity among students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We propose that a deeper understanding of Ubuntu philosophy and its principles is essential to maintaining its cultural integrity if it is to be incorporated into the education system.

It is on these grounds that in the following sections we begin by theorising Ubuntu philosophy. We draw from Mbigi's (1997) Collective Fingers Theory to bring forth the principles guiding Ubuntu philosophy, which drive the cultivation and promotion of values of solidarity, cooperation, respect, inclusivity and social cohesion. We discuss themes of Ubuntu philosophy, principles of Ubuntu philosophy, Ubuntu pedagogy and Ubuntu pedagogy as a transformational approach. Later, we look at implications of Ubuntu pedagogy for indigenous students and students from diverse cultural backgrounds in South African educational settings. We also provide guidelines for the possible implementation of Ubuntu philosophical principles in diverse educational settings.

The Collective Fingers Theory

The Collective Fingers Theory (CFT) (Mbigi 1997:32) draws from the principles of the Ubuntu philosophy. An African principle behind the CFT is that "a thumb although it is strong cannot kill aphids on its own; it would require the collective cooperation of the other fingers" (Mbigi 1997:

33). From this African proverb we can construe two meanings. Firstly, like fingers, individual people need to work cooperatively to achieve any aspired goal. Secondly, the fingers in the proverb can represent core African values, which when internalised and nurtured can promote a collective culture. The five core values of Ubuntu as identified by Mbigi (1997:33) are: survival, spirit of solidarity, compassion, respect and dignity. Survival enabled African communities, during harsh environmental conditions, to rely on each other for existence despite differences they might have had amongst themselves. Solidarity entails working together and cooperatively to achieve a common goal. The third value, compassion, refers to the human's ability to understand other people's challenges and problems. Compassion is fundamental to the feeling of belonging and interconnectedness among African communities. The last values of the theory, respect and dignity, are important for a high regard for rights, values and beliefs for others, irrespective of diversity. Dignity is a behaviour or a trait that can earn someone respect. For Africans, if a person seeks to achieve a positive engagement with members of the community, respect and dignity are paramount requisites (Mbigi 1997:32).

Nxumalo and Mncube (2019) used the CFT to explore the value of incorporating Ubuntu philosophy in the school curriculum through indigenous games. The study analysed three isiZulu indigenous games and demonstrated that African indigenous games can be successfully used to teach Ubuntu philosophy. On the other hand, Ngubane and Gumede (2018) used the CFT to frame the facilitation of academic support in a higher education institution in South Africa. They implemented Ubuntu pedagogy as a strategy to facilitate the development of academic literacy practices among first year Engineering students in a university of technology. Findings from the study indicate that a supportive learning environment grounded in the core principles of Ubuntu philosophy is imperative for the learning of academic literacy skills. Participants acknowledged the role of Ubuntu philosophy's pillars of solidarity, cooperation, respect, caring and kindness as a driving force and motivation for sharing ideas, resources and skills during learning.

Findings from the above-mentioned studies imply that learning, within the CFT, becomes a collective, supportive and social process, as opposed to individual and competitive experience (Ngubane & Gumede, 2018). Furthermore, learning within the context embodied by the Ubuntu core values of survival, solidarity spirit, compassion, respect and dignity can reunite indigenous students with their African value systems. Based on these positive implications of applying the CFT, this study draws from the Collective Fingers Theory, to examine the extent to which the principles of Ubuntu philosophy can cultivate and restore African indigenous values and cultures and transform educational practices in diverse South African classrooms.

Ubuntu philosophy

Broodryk (2005:128) argues that the African philosophy of Ubuntu is not easy to encapsulate in a definite meaning because its understanding is derived from a concrete context in which it thrives. He further asserts that to condense it into a standard definition will destroy its essence. Meanwhile, various understandings of Ubuntu philosophy have emerged from global literature over the past decades. Philosophers, politicians, academic scholars and community leaders have provided different interpretations and perspectives of Ubuntu philosophy. An African philosopher and scholar, Bhengu (2006:46), for example, conceives Ubuntu philosophy as an African indigenous way of life, a practice born of a kinship culture of collective solidarity. In African cultures Ubuntu is regarded as the capacity to express humanity, compassion, respect, dignity and mutual caring. When a person is said to have Ubuntu, it means that the person is kind, generous, caring and compassionate to other fellow human beings. In other words, a person with Ubuntu shares what they have, no matter how little it is, so that other people may have something as well. Compassion is an essence of Ubuntu philosophy (Nussbaum 2003:2). One may then ask whether philanthropists could be linked with Ubuntu.

Broodryk (2005:128) considers Ubuntu philosophy as an “ancient African worldview based on the primary values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in the spirit of family”. Ubuntu lies not only in sharing what you have with another person, but respecting fellow human beings brings about harmony and peace within the community. It becomes easier to share, cooperate and co-exist if there is mutual respect among community members.

Even though most recent writings argue that the concept of Ubuntu originates from indigenous African Bantu people’s philosophy and knowledge (Nxumalo & Mncube 2019: 104), other scholars (Ramose 2002:231) trace the concept of Ubuntu back to ancient Hemes Trismegistus of Kemet, Egypt, in 1049 B.C. He argues that what we know today as Ubuntu was called ‘Maat’ in ancient Egypt. Of the 42 principles of Maat, the Nguni ancient philosophers chose ones for their specific circumstances and Ubuntu philosophy was one of the principles. It is therefore noteworthy to mention that Ubuntu as a humanist or communalist concept is not exclusively an African concept; Ubuntu could also be found in other parts of the world such as Asian and Latin American countries, and even in southern Europe: Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy and so on, where Euroscepticism based on individualism, exclusivity and instrumentalism thrives less. Because Ubuntu is the opposite of individualism, it is quite common in non-Eurocentric societies, particularly in African societies (Ramose 2002: 231).

Nevertheless, Bhengu (2006:46) contemplates that the word ‘Ubuntu’ is derived from the word ‘umuntu’ which means a human being in indigenous languages, the southern African Nguni group of languages (isiZulu/isiXhosa/isiSwati/isiNdebele). ‘Umuntu’ is ‘motho’ in the SeSotho language, another indigenous South Africa language. There is no Ubuntu before there is a human being, ‘umuntu’ or human beings, ‘abantu’ (Mbeje 2010:6). Mbeje (2010:10) points out that in Africa a human being lives among other human beings to form a family, a community or a society. It is within these communal spaces that the hardships of life among ancient indigenous African people taught them survival skills. They soon realised that hunting for food as a group is better than hunting alone because there are better chances of catching the prey as a group than alone. This in a sense encourages teamwork, solidarity and caring for one another. They began to share food, farming tools and knowledge to exist in order to survive. This value of collective existence, as opposed to individual value, gave rise to the Zulu maxim of *Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu* (my being is tied to your being, I am because you are) (Tutu 2000:48). Alternatively, it can be translated to other South African indigenous languages like Sesotho as ‘*motho ke motho ka batho*’. Ramose explains the maxim in the following way:

to be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them (Ramose 1999: 26).

In similar ways, Mbiti (1969: 36) argues that it is not easy to comprehend the dynamics of Ubuntu philosophy without understanding how communities practise it, live and apply it in their everyday lives. In explaining Ubuntu philosophy, Mbiti upholds that:

In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create, or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group ... Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: ‘I am, because we are; and since we are therefore I am’ (Mbiti 1969: 36).

Certainly, solidarity is central to Ubuntu philosophy. Anything, good or bad, that happens to the individual happens to the group. This solidarity gives rise to interconnectedness, interdependence, cooperation and the responsibility of individuals towards each other. Letseka (2013:335) agrees that Ubuntu philosophy embodies values and principles of solidarity,

compassion, cooperation, co-existence, connectedness, inclusivity, respect, dignity, sympathy and peace.

Guiding principles of Ubuntu philosophy

The principle of solidarity is a cornerstone of Ubuntu philosophy. It refers to the combined effort of individuals for the survival of their community. The existence and survival of indigenous African communities was maximised by interdependence and interconnectedness among community members. The principle of solidarity entails the commitment and willingness by community members to abandon the acts of individuality and 'self' for the mutual flowering of the entire group (Mbigi, 1997:32). In practice, solidarity necessitates that act to promote the welfare of all members as well as himself. In African societies, no human being is an island. Communalism, a perspective of Ubuntu philosophy, assumes that no human being can live for himself alone. A human being is always dependent on others.

Solidarity is also an authentic moral virtue, not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of other fellow human beings but it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good of all others (Goduka 2000: 66).

The principle of solidarity thrives on unity, unconditional love and respect for one another, mutual interest for collective survival and responsibility towards fellow members as opposed to selfishness and competitiveness towards or among African community members. In the same way, Muwanga-Zake (2009: 415) claims that "the spirit of solidarity is best epitomised by a metaphor that "one finger cannot crush a grain of wheat on its own, it needs the help of the other four fingers". In other words, the ability of humans to interdependently pull together in a 'one for all and all for one' spirit, is the value of solidarity.

Coexistence is another core principle of Ubuntu philosophy. This is the ability to live with others (co-exist) in harmony. It is framed by mutual Ubuntu values of respect and solidarity. One of the educational goals is to promote peace and coexistence in educational settings:

In these times more than ever values are needed, these being points of reference and an educational plan of action is necessary and urgent based on three pillars: non-violence, equality and freedom. These must be the basis of education in all countries whatever their beliefs, religious principles or their cultural sensibilities. The current objective is to create a new humanism for the XXI Century (UNESCO 2015:294).

Co-existence thrives on mutual interdependence among members of the group, cooperation and mutual respect. In relation to coexistence, Ubuntu is more concerned with the fact that as human beings we cannot exist isolation.

Ubuntu speaks to interconnectedness ... We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas we are connected and what we do affects the existence of the group" (Tutu 2000:22).

Where there is Ubuntu, there is respect and peace. There is equality among members of the community. Coexistence among learners entails that there is acceptance and respect of diversity. This includes accepting and respecting other people's opinions and ideas that differ from yours. Coexistence flourishes where learners embrace cooperation and mutual learning goals.

Ubuntu philosophy also thrives on compassion, which is another important principle. Du Toit, Poovan and Engelbrecht (2006: 19) assert that "Humans' ability to understand others' dilemmas and challenges is compassion." According to these scholars, compassion promotes feelings of belonging and interconnectedness observed in African communities. Compassion is probably one of the most important principles of Ubuntu philosophy and the indigenous African way of life. It is a sense and feeling of care, sympathy and concern for another person which becomes evident through helping another human being, sharing and showing sympathy towards

others. Showing kindness through sharing and sympathy towards another human being is important in African cultures. Sharing what you have with another is confirmation of belonging and brotherhood in African cultures. Compassion inspires love and caring for one another and motivates feelings of 'I cannot have all while you have nothing, let us share' hence, *umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu*. For African cultures, the principle of compassion comes first as it naturally permits other values of cooperation, solidarity and co-existence. In other words, compassion holds members of the cultural communities together and strengthens bonds of togetherness and solidarity. It helps to maintain positive relationships (Mbigi 1997:32).

The fourth, and last, principle of Ubuntu philosophy is respect and dignity. Poovan (2005:25) argues that Ubuntu values of respect and dignity are the fundamental social values in the African cultures. "It is only through respecting others and according them with dignity that one gains others respect and trust" (Poovan 2005: 25). Respect played a vital role among African indigenous cultural people. It promoted harmony and peace:

interpersonal relationships should be managed on the basis of unconditional acceptance and positive regard. Unconditional respect is the basis of effective communism, positive relations, effective cooperation and harmonious co-existence (Poovan 2005: 25).

Mutual respect among members is therefore crucial, as it yields a positive cultural climate and sustains the Ubuntu values of co-existence, cooperation and solidarity among people.

Ubuntu pedagogy

The concept of Ubuntu pedagogy is defined as "a humanising approach to teaching and engaging students in the learning process" (Blackwood, 2018: 30). Teachers embracing Ubuntu pedagogy create a learning space that "affirms, validates, and treats students as dignified human beings regardless of their race or class" (Ukpokodu 2016: 155). "A learner-centred pedagogical approach that promotes democratic atmospheres where students feel respected, cared for and have the freedom to co-learn in an environment where power relations are grounded in humanism" (Ukpokodu 2016: 155). Central to Ubuntu pedagogy is the idea that all learners, irrespective of their racial, educational, economic and linguistic backgrounds and sexual orientations are humans, who are capable of excelling in their learning if their humanity is positioned at the forefront of their teaching and learning. That is, Ubuntu pedagogy asserts learners as significant others who bring unique backgrounds, experiences and prior knowledge for teachers to build on towards the development of new knowledge. In that way, teachers need learners' contributions to create a meaningful learning space. One is not complete without the other. Hence, the essence of Ubuntu pedagogy lies in the recognition of equal partnership between the teachers and students as co-creators of knowledge. Thus, the Ubuntu maxim 'umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu' (a person is a person through other people) comes into full blossom in the classroom (Letseka 2000:335).

When teachers understand and embrace Ubuntu, it is likely that Ubuntu values can empower them to combat exclusion and employ pedagogies that aim to reach all learners in the classrooms. Inclusive pedagogies thrive on the connectedness between learners, teachers and a community of learning, which all provide a positive environment, which in turn positively influences learners' self-worth, self-belief and achievement. Successful learning depends on these networks of support. Phasha (2016: 4) argues that inclusive education is the essence of Ubuntu – that we live in a delicate web of interconnectedness and interdependence with each other: 'I am because we are' (Phasha 2016:4). Inclusive pedagogy, like Ubuntu, has the potential to promote respect, cooperation and solidarity among learners and teachers. In this way, all learners feel a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Ubuntu in education is considered to be African cultural capitals that provide indigenous knowledge which is actually important for integrating into our African conception of inclusion which in turn promote inclusivity (Letseka 2013: 148).

In other words, *Ubuntu* pedagogy does not only encourage the development of all learners as individuals, but it also promotes active collaboration between learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds who bring different characteristics and learning needs into the classrooms. In this way, *Ubuntu* pedagogy affirms diversity as an ordinary aspect of development. *Ubuntu* pedagogy rejects exclusion, marginalisation and inequality in the teaching and learning spaces (Phasha 2016:5).

The values of Ubuntu embrace principles of social justice (Broodryk 2005:128). Social justice relates to principles of equality, equity and fairness towards members of a community or individuals who have been previously marginalised, disadvantaged or excluded economically, politically and socially based on their race, gender, social class, language, religion, sexual preference and beliefs. Equally, where Ubuntu is recognised, there is a respect for diversity in religion, race, gender, beliefs, sexual orientation and language. Teachers practising within Ubuntu perspectives provide all learners, irrespective of their cultural, linguistic, social class, religion and sexual orientations, with equal opportunities to develop and to exercise their full capacities (Letseka 2013:335). Where Ubuntu pedagogy and social justice exist in a classroom, all learners are treated with dignity and respect regardless of their backgrounds. “The value of Ubuntu is to make the relationship between learners and break down the barriers of diversity within the classroom settings. These are also goals of social justice in education” (Broodryk 2005: 46). Ubuntu encompasses values of social justice and promotes relationships between learners, breaking down barriers and stereotypes with regard to race, gender, ability, language and culture. For teachers and schools to fully practise social justice, they should first be influenced by *Ubuntu* values. Ubuntu, therefore, can be regarded as a weapon that can be used by teachers to challenge inequity and injustices (Nxumalo & Mncube 2019:107).

Ubuntu pedagogy as a transformative approach

Ubuntu pedagogy is anchored by five principles which underpin and guide its possible and effective implementation as a transformative pedagogical strategy in diverse educational settings: understanding self and others; building positive relationships; getting the class to work together; nurturing the minds of the students; teaching from a position of love and care; and utilising learners’ linguistic resources to promote meaningful learning (Ukpokodu 2016:155).

Understanding self and others

Through participation and interactions humans develop identity and belonging. From an African perspective, teaching and learning suggests that it is through engagement with other people that a person grows more fully human, more truly in their identity. In other words, through participation and interaction with others we see ourselves – ‘I participate, therefore I am’ (Tutu 2000). I see myself through others, therefore I belong. *Ubuntu* pedagogy, therefore, places value on collective learning through interactions and participation. Learners understand more of what they know or do not know through interactions with others. Active learning through participation, interactions, sharing of ideas, knowledge and experiences promotes effective learning. Equally, understanding of self and others is critical in a learning process. If you understand yourself, you know your strengths and accept your weaknesses. If you understand others, you also understand their strengths and weaknesses. A learning process therefore becomes an interdependent and a mutual activity (Ukpokodu 2016:154).

Building a positive relationship

A second component of *Ubuntu* pedagogy is building a positive relationship. It is this component of *Ubuntu* pedagogy that is responsible for peace and harmonious learning environments where learners respect one another and their teachers as adults within the learning context. Effective learning cannot take place unless learners, firstly, love one another, and secondly, respect each other as individuals and human beings. Love for one another creates a positive learning atmosphere among learners. Love brings care for another, sympathy, forgiveness, sharing and peace in the classroom. Love among learners ensures that they share not only knowledge, but they also share learning tools and learning spaces with one another. Love promotes respect among learners and teachers and this leads to positive relations in the classroom (Ukpokodu 2016:154). Respect also entails that learners treat one another with dignity. They respect each other's ideas and experiences even though they differ from their own. When learners love and respect each other, there are high chances that they will listen to one another's ideas and thoughts. Respect is an essential principle of *Ubuntu* philosophy and way of life and it guides teaching and learning; it leads to positive relationships and harmony among individuals. Teaching and learning anchored by *Ubuntu* brings about kindness, caring, togetherness, solidarity, cooperation and sharing among learners and teachers, which all promote positive relationships (Ukpokodu 2016:154).

Working together and cooperatively

Working together is another important principle of *Ubuntu* pedagogy. It promotes unity and team spirit among learners as they tackle learning problems. Unity ensures solidarity, oneness among group members. In such a learning environment, learners value one another and they cease to see one another as competitors, but see them as team members, and extensions of the other. In an effective teamwork, each member is important for a successful learning experience. Each member's contribution is important. Working together promotes the *Ubuntu* notion of 'for I know, so you know' classroom environment where learners not only take care of each other's physical needs such as sharing classroom furniture and learning tools, but they also share knowledge, thus extending each other's cognitive development. Supporting one another is a vital component of *Ubuntu* pedagogy. In an African *Ubuntu* perspective, sharing knowledge means I give you what I know, I am giving you what I have so that you can also have, because tomorrow I will also need your help. Therefore, *Ubuntu* pedagogy ensures that learners work together and help one another to learn and understand the learning material. This what Vygotsky (1978:105) calls a socio-cultural environment which builds on peer support scaffolding for effective learning opportunities. Scaffolding refers to carefully designed activities by which the knowledgeable peers support struggling peers until they can independently carry the task without any support, by which they reach a level of proximal development (ZPD). However, where there is a lack of *Ubuntu*, humanity, there is little help and care for another person. There is little support among learners, as each learner learns for himself or herself. This way of learning is mostly prominent in the Western education system which promotes individualistic and competitive learning. In such learning environments, weak learners remain weak and strong learners continue to achieve and shine. In contrast, *Ubuntu* pedagogy draws from an African communal way of living and sharing where people share their blessings with those who have little or none. When you have knowledge, you share it with others. In essence, when learners work together, they achieve more than they could when they worked as individuals. That is the principle of *Ubuntu* pedagogy (Ukpokodu 2016:154).

Nurturing of learners' minds

Another important element of *Ubuntu* pedagogy is the nurturing of learners' minds. *Ubuntu* pedagogy prioritises participative and interactive learning. Learners learn best when they interact with their ideas, thoughts and experiences with each other. Interaction on the learning material maximises participation. Actively learning promotes engagement with the learning materials. Learners get opportunities to discuss the problems, to ask questions, to debate on concepts and to share their thinking and experiences. Such classrooms foster cognitive development among learners. They nurture learners' minds and expand their learning opportunities (Ukpokodu 2016:155).

Teaching from a position of love and care

It is almost impossible to speak of *Ubuntu* without referring to acts of humanity such as love, kindness, sympathy and respect and solidarity. Education without love becomes a mere ideology (Blackwood 2018:30). Teachers may use expected teaching strategies and techniques, but if teachers lack love for the students and for the teaching, such efforts fail to inspire students. If good strategies are used by an unloving teacher who spends more time consciously or unconsciously speaking and acting in contrary to love, this may disempower students and they may lose respect for the teacher. That is, teaching that truly inspires and empowers students does not come only from good strategies and a perfect curriculum, but it is the pedagogy that is love-centred. A teacher's love makes a difference in the presence of effective teaching tools and strategies. Without a loving and inspirational teacher in the classroom, subjects and learning can be boring and irrelevant. Loving teachers trigger an experience of love, respect and caring from the students in the way they speak to students and in the way they treat all their students irrespective of race, gender, cultural backgrounds, academic abilities and physical abilities. "As one develops towards love, one is capable of loving one's self holistically, and because of this holistic love of one's self love, one can love the world holistically" (Blackwood 2018:30). The more students spend time with loving teachers, the more they experience love and the more they become eager to transfer love to others in the classroom. Teaching from a position of love does not only empower students in the classroom, it also sparks a change for the better in students, no matter what the situation is (Blackwood 2018:30).

A classroom is a place that enables teachers to show love and care for their students through helping them to develop cognitively and holistically. Teachers' love helps students to persevere in times of academic challenges. It pushes students to try again and again in times of challenges. A teacher's love motivates students to see themselves as achievers. Teachers who teach from the perspective of love and care are able to embrace their students' diverse personalities and they love their strengths and weaknesses in the classroom (Blackwood 2018:30). Such teachers never doubt the potential and capabilities of their students. Instead, they help students grow beyond their intellectual abilities. A classroom that is centred on a teacher's love towards students and among students is nurturing and supportive. Students are motivated to help one another overcome learning barriers. They are encouraged to be cooperative and to be kind towards others' learning challenges. In that way, students become willing to learn together and share information. Such pedagogy is anchored by *Ubuntu* (Ukpokodu 2016:156).

Utilising students' linguistic resources to promote meaningful learning

Most classrooms in the world, and especially in South Africa, consist of second language students. These students bring to educational institutions a home language that differs from a school language. The presence of more than one language makes many classrooms bilingual or multilingual. However, research shows that many educational institutions, despite accepting

multilingual students into their classrooms, remain monolingual in their language of teaching and learning which, in the case of South Africa, is English. That is, many educational institutions continue to neglect languages that students bring with them from home and they persist in using a foreign language, English, for teaching and learning for multilingual students (Makalela 2014:187). Learning in a second language is one of the major learning barriers for second language students. Makelela (2014:187) calls for an urgent acknowledgement of students' diverse languages for meaningful learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms.

Accepting, respecting and embracing students' diverse linguistic resources does not only enhance their learning; it also restores identity and dignity. It is through their languages that students are able to make sense of the world and reflect meaningfully. Embracing students' home languages alongside the language of teaching and learning restores students' identity and the dignity of their cultural languages. Besides, Makelela (2014:188) feels that it is time that boundaries that isolate and separate languages are broken so all languages that students bring to the classrooms could be used for enhancing students' learning. Multilingual practices such as translanguaging enables teachers and students to draw from different linguistic repertoires for meaningful and purposeful learning. However, successful multilingual practices such as translanguaging requires that teachers accept and recognise all languages spoken by students as equal. Linguistic equality means that no language is viewed as superior to other languages in the classroom (Makalela 2016:188).

Ubuntu pedagogy: Implications for practice

It has been argued in this paper that the colonial education system has socialised African students out of their indigenous beliefs and knowledge systems. They no longer remember who they are. They have lost their values and identity. On the other hand, this paper has also argued that teaching and learning from an African perspective, that is rich in cultural practices such as Ubuntu, have the potential to preserve indigenous knowledge systems and practices among students and restore their identities. This implies that teachers, especially those teaching in the post-colonial and decolonial educational settings, should draw from Ubuntu pedagogy to provide students with environments in which they can actively engage with others because it is through participation and interaction with others that students understand themselves and others and grow more fully human, more truly in their identity (Muwanga-Zake 2009:413).

Secondly, Ubuntu pedagogy seeks to weaken the Eurocentric methodologies that draw from Euroscepticism, individualism and exclusivity. Pedagogies that build from Ubuntu philosophy promote cooperation among students. Such classrooms instil in students the communal values so that they learn and embrace the spirit of sharing. Students learn that if you have knowledge, you share it with others. They begin to appreciate that when they work together, they achieve more than they could when they work as individuals. As such, Ubuntu pedagogy thrives on positive relationships among students, which yields respect, love for one another, sympathy and sharing of learning resources and knowledge. Teachers utilising Ubuntu pedagogy promote respect among students and this entails that students treat each other with dignity. They embrace and respect each other's ideas and experiences even though they may differ from their own. Teaching anchored in the values of Ubuntu creates positive learning atmospheres among students and teachers and promotes social cohesion (Ukpokodu 2016:154).

Third and lastly, in South Africa the majority of students in educational institutions are African students. Strangely enough, they learn through a foreign and colonial language, English, while their indigenous languages remain marginalised. Teaching and learning grounded on Ubuntu philosophical principles respects and restores dignity to students' heritages, including their languages. Ubuntu pedagogy enables teachers to recognise and utilise students' linguistic resources to create meaningful learning experiences.

Conclusion

In this article we have argued that pedagogical practices in Africa, and in South Africa particularly, remain rooted in Western philosophies and world views, and as such, do not culturally appeal to the majority of learners in the classrooms who are African students. We have argued that the persistence of colonial methodologies has seen many African students losing touch with their indigenous beliefs and knowledge systems. They have lost their values and identity. We therefore call for the transformation of educational practices through the Ubuntu pedagogy which draws from the indigenous African philosophy of Ubuntu as an alternative pedagogical approach for institutions located in Africa.

We further argue that Ubuntu philosophy, when embraced with the understanding and dignity it deserves, can be a vital educational tool for the cultivation and restoration of African indigenous values and cultures in diverse educational settings. We propose Ubuntu pedagogy (Ukpokodu 2016:154) as a transformative teaching approach that can foster understanding of self and others among learners; build positive relationships; encourage cooperation and respect among learners; inspire teachers to teach from a position of love and care and promote inclusion and social justice. Ultimately, this paper provides principles that guide the possible and effective implementation of Ubuntu pedagogy in diverse educational settings and implication for practice. Furthermore, it contributes to the ongoing debates on the decolonisation of education and the role of Ubuntu philosophy in the restoration of African values in the South African education system.

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